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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the supply and importance of minority teachers and predicts the effects of admissions and certification exams on the percentage of minorities in the new teacher pool. The analysis is based on the results of tests administered in one state, Texas (a teacher education program admissions test and a certification examination). The data indicate that the percentage of minorities in the new teacher pool is declining. The data support predictions that only 5 percent of the U.S. teaching force will be minorities by the year 2000 when at least one-third of the students will be minorities. (JD)

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Impact of Admissions and Certification Exams On the Percentage of Minorities in the New Teacher Pool: A Case Study

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Abstract

This paper discusses the supply and importance of minority teachers and predicts the effects admissions and certification exams are having on the percentage of minorities in the new teacher pool using the results of tests administered in one state, Texas. Based on the data from that state, the author concludes that the percentage of minorities in the new teacher pool is declining and that predictions that only 5% of our nation's teaching force will be minorities by the year 2000 are supported by the data.

Impact of Admissions and Certification Exams on the Percentage of Minorities in the New Teacher Pool: A Case Study

Testing of those would be teachers is a cornerstone of the current educational reform movement despite a lack of evidence that paper-and-pencil tests predict ability to teach (Garcia, 1986; Smith, 1987; Zapata, 1987-1988). The number of states requiring either admissions or certification tests, or both, has grown from 10 in 1980 to 47 in 1989 (Association of Teacher Educators, 1988; Eissenberg & Rudner, 1988). Twenty-six states now require admissions tests to screen students before they are admitted to teacher education programs. These tests typically assess reading, writing, and mathematics abilities. Thirty-six states now require certification tests. These tests typically assess basic skills, knowledge of pedagogy, and subject area knowledge. Eighteen states administer both admissions and certification tests.

The rate at which minorities pass these tests is significantly lower than the rate at which whites pass these tests, no matter which test is used and whether the test is used for admissions or certification (Smith, 1987). There is increasing concern that these tests will further reduce the supply of minority teachers at the same time that the percentage of minority students enrolled in our schools is increasing. This paper briefly discusses the supply and importance of minority teachers, then predicts the effects these tests will have on the supply of new minority teachers in states requiring both admissions and certification testing based on data from one state administering both admissions and certification tests, Texas.

In 1980 minority teachers made-up 12.5% of the national teaching force (Cole, 1986). It is estimated that minority teachers make-up 10% of the national teaching force today, but only 8% of newly-hired teachers (AACTE, 1987). Predictions are that, if this downward trend

continues, only 5% of the nation's teachers will be minorities by the year 2000 (Winkler, 1985; Gifford, 1986).

Many factors are contributing to the decline in the number of new minority teachers. The percentage of minority students entering higher education is declining ("At risk", 1986). Most minority students who enter 4 year colleges drop out before graduation (Chinn, 1987-1988). Minority students enrolled in higher education are increasingly choosing majors which lead to careers with greater financial rewards and better working conditions than teaching, once one of the few professions open to college-educated minorities (Chinn, 1987-1988). Admittance and certification exams are also having an impact on the number of new minority teachers.

While the proportion of minorities in our nation's teaching force is decreasing, the proportion of minority students in our nation's schools is increasing. Twenty percent of today's school-age children are minorities (Chinn, 1987-1988). Within the next 30 years that percentage will increase to over 33% nationwide (Case, Shive, Ingebreston, & Spiegel, 1988), and minority children will become the majority in schools in five states in the southwest by the year 2000 (Chinn, 1987-1988). Many of these minority children may be denied exposure to minority teachers during their school years, deprived of successful professional role models in education, and convinced that educational achievement is "off limits" to them. Majority children will also be denied exposure to competent minorities in professional roles.

Texas is one of 18 states requiring that students pass an admissions test before they are admitted to a teacher education program as juniors and a certification examination, given during their last semester, before they are certified to teach. Data from the testing program in the State of Texas provides information about the impact of competency testing on the ethnic composition of the pool of new teachers.

Numbers Passing Admissions & Certification Exams

Table 1 presents the number and ethnicity of students eventually passing all parts of the exam required for admission to teacher education programs in Texas over the three year period from the spring of 1984 to the summer of 1987 (Texas Education Agency, 1987), the latest period for which cumulative data is available (Reyna, 1989). Over this time period 8,707 or 18% of the students taking the admissions test were Black or Hispanic; and 39,814 or 82% were White. 3,731 or 10% of the students who eventually passed all parts of the test were Black or Hispanic; and 32,086 or 88% were White.

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Table 2 shows the total number of initial certification tests passed, by ethnicity, from the spring of 1986 to the summer of 1988 (Texas Education Agency, 1989). Blacks and Hispanics took 13,465 or 21.0% of these tests; Whites and Others took 50,768 or 79.0%. Blacks and Hispanics passed 7,485 or 14.4% of the tests passed; Whites and Others passed 44,404 or 85.6% of the tests passed. Since students seeking initial certification are usually required to pass more than one test (e.g., elementary certification requires passing 2 tests; secondary certification at least 2; special education certification at least 3) the numbers in Table 2 don't indicate the number of students who qualified for certification. The critical numbers are not how many tests are passed but how many students pass all the tests required for the certification they seek. That information is not available from the Texas Education Agency (Reyna, 1989).

INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

Maximum Numbers Qualifying for Initial Certification

Table 3 indicates the maximum number of teacher education students qualifying for initial certification in Texas from spring 1986 to summer 1989, by ethnicity. The numbers in this table are projected from the number of students who passed all parts of the admissions exam from 1984 to 1987 and the rates at which students seeking initial certification passed individual parts of certification tests from 1986 to 1988. **If** all of the students who passed the admissions exam from 1984 to 1987 stayed in school and completed a teacher education program within two years, and **if** the rates at which the various groups passed individual parts of the certification tests were the rate at which they passed all the parts of the certification tests, **then** Blacks or Hispanics would account for a maximum of 2089 or 7% of new teachers certified in Texas over the last three years and Whites would account for 28255 or 93%. Many minority students who wanted to be teachers were barred from entry into teacher education programs by low scores on admissions tests. Many of those who were admitted to and completed teacher education programs failed certification examinations at the end of their course of study. Of the 8708 Blacks and Hispanics who wanted to teach, as evidenced by their taking the admissions exam, 2089 or 24% would be certified; 28255 or 69.1% of the Whites and Others who wanted to teach would be certified.

INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

These predictions are inflated. In fact, the real figures must be even more dismal. Previous research (Chinn 1987-1988) tells us that not all of the students who passed the admissions exam completed their studies, and that the greatest attrition rate would be among minority students. The passing rates for the certification tests used to make these predictions do not represent the rates at which potential teachers from each ethnic group passed all subtests required for certification, and previous research indicates (Smith, 1987) that the decrease in rates from passing an individual test to passing all tests required for certification would be greatest among minority students.

The prediction that only 5% of our nation's teachers will be minorities at the turn of the century when at least a third of our students will be minorities is supported by the data presented in this case study. Already minorities make up a maximum of 7% of the teacher education students qualifying for certification in Texas, below the percentage of newly-hired minority teachers nationwide in 1987 (AACTE, 1987). Demographers predict that the next generation of Americans will be more ethnically diverse than any previous generation; that a large percent of minority children will be from poor, single-parent homes; and that many will have limited English proficiency ("Today's numbers," 1988). If we are to meet the needs of these students and our nation we must find ways to increase the number of minority teachers available to educate and act as role models for our growing minority population. Priority must given to the recruitment and retention of minority students in teacher education programs and to the development of valid and non-discriminatory means of predicting the teaching success of potential teachers in order to increase the proportion of minorities in the pool of new teachers over the coming decades.

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Table 1

Number Passing all Parts of Education Admissions Exam from Spring 1984 to Summer 1987 by Ethnicity

Ethnicity	# Taking	# Passing	% Passing	% of Those Passing
Black	2342	758	32.4	2.1
Hispanic	6365	2973	46.7	8.1
White	39814	32086	80.6	88.1
Other	1079	617	57.2	1.7
Total	49600	36434	73.5	100.0

Table 2

Total Number of Initial Certification Tests Passed from Spring 1986 to Summer 1988 by Ethicity

Ethnicity	# Taking	# Passing	% Passing	% of Those Passing
Black	3082	1363	44.2	2.6
Hispanic	10383	6122	59.0	11.8
White & Other	50768	44404	87.5	85.6
Total	64233	51889	80.8	100.0

Table 3

Maximum Numbers Qualifying for Initial Certification from Spring 1986 to Summer 1989 by Ethnicity

Ethnicity	#Passing Admissions Exam 1984-87	Pass Rate for Individual Certification Exams	Maximum # Qualified for Certification 1986-89	% of New Teacher Pool
Black	758	44.2%	335	01
Hispanic	2973	59.0%	1754	06
White & Other	32703	86.4%	28255	93
Total	36434	63.2%	30344	100